

Published March 25th, 2015

Saint Mary's Tops Hawaii in Overtime Thriller in WNIT Opening Round

By Karl Buscheck



Carly Turner

minutes to go.

"They hit some shots. Got some momentum and started playing downhill," said Thomas. "And it was funny because that's what we told our players. We had to play downhill."

In the closing seconds of regulation, the Warriors tied up the score at 75-75 to send the game to overtime.

"I'll give them all the credit for coming back, but I was super pleased our kids did not lose their focus in overtime, kept to the game plan and knew we had to get to the free throw line and that's what we did."

During overtime, Saint Mary's demonstrated remarkable poise, as a parade of Gaels drained 16 of 19 free throws to hold off the surging Warriors.

"I think that's the kids we have," said Thomas. "They have that composure. And they have that composure because we practice pressure free throws probably every single day. They have that composure because that's the kind of kids they are. I believe they are built that way. That's their makeup."

Freshman guard Stella Beck sank four consecutive free throws in overtime, while freshman guard Carly Turner hit six of seven on the night, and junior guard Lauren Nicholson was 10-12 from the line on her way to scoring 23 points.

Nobody was more clutch than junior guard Shannon Mauldin, who contributed a career-high 32 points. "I think she just continues to improve," said Thomas. "She did a phenomenal job of just playing under control."

With the win, Saint Mary's earned the right to host Fresno State on March 23 at 7 p.m. in the tournament's second round. The two teams met back in December when the Bulldogs emerged with a 60-56 win. Thomas appreciates that it will be a challenging matchup, but he also appreciates how important it is that the team will be playing in Moraga this time around.

"I know we'll be prepared, and we're very grateful and very pleased that the game is at home. That makes a difference. We get a chance to play in front of our home crowd again."

After earning a berth for the WNIT, Saint Mary's faced a tough opponent in the first round. Saint Mary's escaped with a 92-88 overtime win against Hawaii on March 20 after watching an 18-point second-half lead vanish.

"It was a battle out there," said head coach Paul Thomas after his squad survived the late scare to move onto the second round of the Women's NIT. "I think this team is motivated. I think they want to continue playing."

Saint Mary's led throughout the first half and took a 36-28 edge into the break at McKeon Pavilion. The Gaels stormed out of the locker room, opening up a commanding 50-32 advantage just five minutes into the second half.

With the Gaels seemingly cruising, Hawaii began to slowly claw back into the game, cutting the deficit to single digits with just under five



Shannon Mauldin Photos Tod Fierner

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA